

Family of Muslim Refugee from Kazakhstan Blocked in Istanbul Airport

The case of Kazakhstan clergyman Abdukhalil Abduzhabbarov (also known as 'sheikh Khalil') turned out to be a dramatic one. We have learned recently that his large family who have applied for asylum in Turkey have been blocked in Istanbul airport.

We remind that Abduzhabbarov left Kazakhstan in 2006 because of intelligence agency's persecution. In December of 2015 the authorities of Saudi Arabia detained Abduzhabbarov along with five Kazakhstan students studying in Medina ([details in Russian](#)). They have been under arrest for around 10 months after which the authorities of the country decided to deport most of them (only one of the Kazakhstan citizens was allowed to stay in the country in the end of October).

On October 12, 2016 Abdukhalil, his wife and 10 underage children (four boys and six girls aged 3-17) were compelled to leave Saudi Arabia. They got on Turkish Airlines flight. Several of family members did not have valid passports because Kazakhstan embassy refused to issue them demanding from the Abduzhabbarov to "get back to his homeland." While transferring in Istanbul the family refused to leave for Kazakhstan and applied for asylum to the Turkish authorities. Two days the police tried to force them leave the country but on the second day after the arrival of the lawyer who got in the case with the assistance of the NGO IHH pressure was ceased.

Yesterday we learned that the 12 family members had been held in the airport, in two isolated rooms without windows, for more than a month by now. They do not have a possibility to walk outside. The food is provided by the «Turkish Airlines».

In the middle of October due to drastic health worsening (children were nauseous, for several days they refused to eat) five children accompanied by their mother were taken to the hospital by the police. They spent 10 and 12 hours there. Afterwards they were taken back to the airport.

Human Rights Center Memorial's member managed to get through to Abdukhalil Abduzhabbarov. According to him, the police says: "You can wait for 100 years, there will be no good." The lawyers say, according to Abdukhalil: "The process is complicated, at most, your wife and children will be able to stay in Turkey."

According to Abduzhabbarov, during interrogations in Saudi Arabia the investigator told him that the only reason for the detention was the request by the Kazakhstan authorities to "check" the citizens of the country. In the document, which he could briefly get acquainted with, names of 8 Kazakhstan citizens were mentioned, 6 of whom (including Abduzhabbarov himself) were detained by the Saudi authorities. The document contained incorrect information regarding their alleged connections with Islamic radicals in the Middle East. In October 4 of the detained were deported to Kazakhstan (one of them was reportedly arrested, the fate of the others is unknown).

According to Abduzhabbarov, a week ago officers of the Kazakhstan National Security Committee took his mother-in-law to Istanbul. Accompanied by the representative of Kazakhstan authorities she came to the lawyer, called her daughter and tried to persuade her to get back to Kazakhstan. Abdikhalil's wife, Dinara, refused saying that she will stay with the children. The mother-in-law was taken back to Kazakhstan, she was not granted the possibility to see her daughter. Abduzhabbarov identified one of the people who visited the lawyer. In late 1990s this man had studied with him in Pakistan after which returned to Kazakhstan and got to work for intelligence agencies.

We remind that in May of 2016 - four days after Fergana news-agency had published text on Abduzhabbarov's case - the Kazakhstan public prosecutor's office officially announced that "no measures are being taken regarding the extradition of the citizen Abdulkhalil Abduzhabbarov from Saudi Arabia." The statement was correct only in one aspect: they did not refer to official extradition request (it is unlikely that it was ever implemented) but to an attempt to achieve the expulsion of Abduzhabbarov by manipulating of intelligence information and other special services' methods.

It is hard to predict how the Abduzhabbarovs case will develop. But the awkward position of the Saudi office of the UN Refugee Agency is worth mentioning. In early September Abdukhalil's

wife Dinara visited the Riyadh office for the second time. After the visit office members demonstrated working hard on the case but answered no application and avoided all the contacts with her till the expulsion of the family from the country. It is unclear now if the Turkish office of the Agency will demonstrate the same level of involvement in the case.

[See also \(in Russian\)](#)